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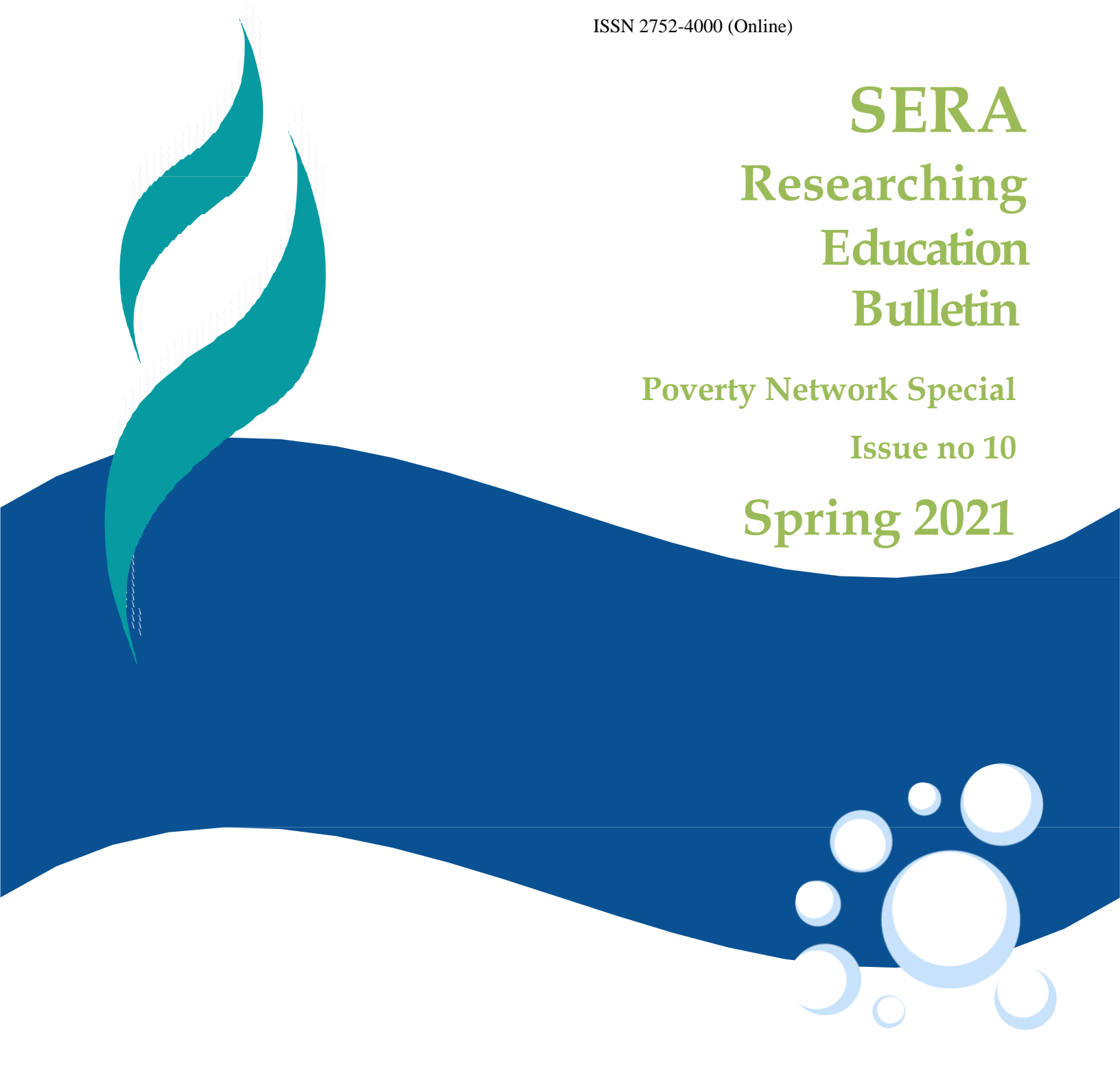
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Editorial

Poverty and Education in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Editorial

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SERA Poverty and Education Network

The Scottish Educational Research Association network: Poverty and Education was launched on the 19th of November 2014, at the SERA conference being held at the University of Edinburgh. The initial steering group consisted of the co-convenors Stephen McKinney, Stuart Hall and Kevin Lowden, University of Glasgow, John McKendrick, Glasgow Caledonian University and Alastair Wilson, University of Strathclyde. Later Katie Hunter of the University of Strathclyde and Archie Graham of the University of Aberdeen would join this group. The creation of the network was within the context of the strategic renewal and development of the SERA networks. The strength of a SERA network is that it is a national network with an international outlook that is under the auspices of SERA and not a particular Scottish university. This national/international dimension facilitates an academic dialogue and collaboration among some of the leading academic researchers in this field and across the universities. One of the main aims of the Poverty and Education network is to highlight new issues and new research into the impact of poverty on education.

The impact of poverty and deprivation on education is a theme that is of major national and international significance throughout the world. This theme is interdisciplinary, incorporating disciplines such as Education (especially Inclusion and Social Justice), Sociology, Political Policy, Gender Issues and International Studies. The theme is important in the context of Scotland, as school education attempts to negotiate the challenges of educating children and young people who belong to low-income families and who can suffer the effects of limited financial resources and consequent detrimental effects on diet, housing, adequate fuel and restricted access to cultural capital. Poverty and deprivation can affect the regularity of attendance at school, concentration at school and opportunities to participate in social and cultural activities. There are serious concerns about the educational progress of these children and young people and their future opportunities and destinations.

The Poverty and Education network has organised a number of events since 2014. The network has presented symposia at the SERA conferences in: the University of Aberdeen 2015, University of Dundee 2016, University of the West of Scotland 2017, the University of Glasgow in 2018 and the University of Edinburgh

in 2019. The conference in 2020 was reconfigured to a much smaller number of online events as a result of the pandemic. The symposia presentations at the SERA conference have provided a platform for the members of the network to share their research. The network has also been very pleased to spotlight the research of new and emerging researchers at some of these symposia. Individual members of the network have been very proactive in presenting their research at SERA conferences (and other conferences) through research papers and other modes of dissemination.

The network was represented at the Symposium of Dangerous Ideas in Stirling in June 2015.The network was represented by Stephen McKinney at a special SERA session at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference in Belfast in 2015. Members of the Poverty and Education Network were involved in the BERA Research Commission on Poverty and Policy Advocacy and there was a strong representation of the network at the BERA Commission Symposium held at the University of Glasgow on 20 April 2016. Many of the leading members of the network delivered presentations at this event. Members of the Network contributed to a series of short responses on the effects of the pandemic on poverty and education in the *Scottish Educational Review* in 2020.

The Network would like to record a very successful working relationship with Dr Joan Mowat of the University of Strathclyde. Dr Mowat was the Co-Convenor of the SERA Leadership in Scottish Education Network (LiSEN) for the period 2014-2020. This working relationship included a joint network event and a shared workshop at the 2019 SERA conference. John McKendrick, Alastair Wilson and Stephen McKinney and other members of the Poverty and Education Network were involved in the Scottish Universities Insight Institute project: *Poverty, Attainment and Wellbeing: Making a Difference to the Lives of Children and Young People* (2018-2019) that was led by Dr Mowat.

Activity of the Poverty and Education Network during the Pandemic

During the pandemic it has become clear that deeper research engagement with the major issues of the impact of poverty on education is a matter of urgency. There were alarmingly high levels of child poverty in Scotland (one in four children) prior to the pandemic. The economic downturn caused by the effects of the pandemic will create even higher levels of child poverty as more households struggle with limited resources. The levels of uptake for means tested free school meals have increased as has the uptake at foodbanks throughout the country.

During the period of the Covid-19 pandemic the SERA Executive opted to invite the networks to present short

online events in the early evening to maintain communication links within the networks and to publicise the work of the networks and the research of the members of the network. The Poverty and Education network organised two events on the 4th and 18th of March 2021 and invited the steering group of the network to present their latest research. These two events were envisaged as initial events, leading to further events that would include invited researchers and speakers. The format for both events was that a series of speakers would have five minutes to present and then there would be comments/questions/discussion from the participants. At the second event on the 18th of March, we invited Sara Spenser of Child Poverty Action Group to provide a concise overview of *The Cost of Learning in Lockdown March 2021 Update* (*Scotland Findings*) that had just been published.

Both events were deemed by the steering group to be very successful and there was very good feedback from the participants. This special edition of SERA Researching Education Bulletin contains a series of short articles based on the presentations at these two events. In a sense these are snap shots, moments in time, that capture some of the research priorities of our steering group in early 2021. Most of the articles are grounded in ongoing research interests and projects and reflect one of the strengths of the steering group and members of the network – a personal and academic commitment to social justice for all children and young people in their access to, and progress in, school education.

The Papers in this Special Edition

In the first paper, Clara Pirie of the Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU), Glasgow Caledonian University provides a very helpful overview of some of the leading research produced in the last twelve months that has focused on poverty and education. For example, she highlights research published by the Scottish Government, the Child Poverty Action Group and the Poverty Alliance. This overview also features two important reports on school meals that have been produced or co-produced by John McKendrick of the Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) at Glasgow Caledonian University.

The second paper by John McKendrick, of the SPIRU, Glasgow Caledonian University is concerned with school food. This paper includes a summary of the recent developments in the provision of free school meals outside term time during the pandemic. He describes the situation in England where the UK government changed track twice in 2020 to support the extension of free school meals. This was after the government was subjected to strong public pressure. He then moves onto a concise history of free school meals in Scotland and the proposals to extend free school meals to all primary school pupils. John concludes with a list of pressing issues that need to be examined. One of the issues is that more robust research evidence is required to support

the assertion that school food is impacting on pupil engagement or educational performance.

Alastair Wilson and Katie Hunter of the University of Strathclyde present a number of key questions that challenge some of the conceptualisations and interventions in Scottish education that attempt to address the 'attainment gap'. They argue that we have to focus on the deep-rooted systemic inequalities in Scottish education and society that promote opportunities for the privileged and act as barriers to exclude many young people who lack the system knowledge and connections. They conclude with a short summary of their own work supporting young people from working class and poor households into higher education.

Kevin Lowden and Stuart Hall of the Robert Owen Centre (ROC), University of Glasgow draw on their extensive experience of supporting practitioner research and report on the work of the Network for Social & Educational Equity (NSEE). The NSEE aims to enhance collaborative enquiry among practitioners and educational leaders as part of their work to tackle the poverty-related achievement gap in education. This is support that is co-constructed, flexible and offered in local contexts. They comment that the ROC team has a strong and consistent commitment to the promotion of teacher agency as an integral part of positive educational change to tackle educational and social inequity.

Archie Graham and Kirsten Darling-McQuistan explore the idea of 'example spaces' and provide some insights into recognising difference in *how* a curricular subject can be taught, via the co-construction of a landscape based on three different theoretical perspectives. Archie and Kirsten ask some challenging questions about the use of example spaces in the preparation of teachers for working in high poverty school environments. It will be intriguing to follow further updates on this research.

Stephen McKinney of the University of Glasgow examines the position of young carers in Scotland, arguing that they should receive more academic and public attention. He explains how they are officially identified as young carers, the duties and responsibilities of young carers, and the challenges they face in balancing their school education with caring. The young carers often belong to households with limited income and the caring duties often affect their ability to engage fully with their school education.

Katie Hunter, Alastair Wilson and Lio Moscardini of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland developed case studies of three local authority areas to understand what music opportunities exist for children and young people both within formal education and out with schools. They discovered that the high and rising costs of music tuition excludes some pupils. They also discovered a trend in formal music provision towards the fulfilment of performance-based criteria. This benefits those children and young people who can access in-

school or private tuition and opportunities to engage in extra-curricular music activities that enhance broader engagement. The team are hoping to engage in deeper research into the causes of this inequality.

Archie Graham, Peter Mtika, Dean Robson, Kevin Stelfox and Lindsay MacDougall from the University of Aberdeen focus on inclusive pedagogy to prepare and support new teachers to work inclusively with increasingly diverse groups of learners, including those from high poverty contexts. They adopt the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) framework for supporting teachers for working in diverse contexts. They report on the findings of a research project that shows the importance of probationers developing intra-professional working practices to help bridge the principles of inclusive pedagogy within their classroom practices.

Stephen McKinney, Stuart Hall and Kevin Lowden highlight some of the features of digital exclusion (or digital poverty). The effects of digital exclusion were heightened during the series of school closures and partial school closures that occurred throughout the world over the last year. This impacted on children and young people who had limited access to technology and to the internet but also on some teachers who struggled to upskill and lacked the necessary equipment.

Sara Spencer of the Child Poverty Action Group contributes a series of insights from the two surveys conducted by CPAG in 2020 and 2021. The surveys were designed to assess the impact of school closures and learning at home for families on low incomes. She addresses issues such as food insecurity and digital exclusion and identifies both the challenges faced by families and some of the successful support that has been provided. A large percentage of the samples in both surveys, for example, commented that cash replacement for free school meals is the most efficient way to provide food for the children.

The SERA Poverty and Education Network would like to thank Dr Lorna Hamilton for the invitation to submit this special edition and for her enthusiasm and encouragement for this project. We would also like to thank all those who have contributed to the special edition: Archie Graham, Kirsten Darling-McQuistan, Lyndsay MacDougall, Peter Mtika, Dean Robson and Kevin Stelfox of the University of Aberdeen; John McKendrick and Clara Pirie of Glasgow Caledonian University; Kevin Lowden and Stuart Hall of the Robert Owen Centre, University of Glasgow; Katie Hunter and Alastair Wilson of the University of Strathclyde; Lio Moscardini of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; Sara Spencer of the Child Poverty Action Group and Stephen McKinney of the School of Education, University of Glasgow. Finally, we offer thanks for the support of the SERA Executive, especially Dr Angela Jaap for her assistance in organising the Eventbrite page and link and for her advice, at both of the online network events.

Evidence round-up: poverty and education research during the COVID-19 period

Clara Pirie, Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU), Glasgow Caledonian University

The relationship between poverty, deprivation and education has long been of interest to social and educational researchers. In recent years, the poverty-related attainment gap has been high on the agenda of policymakers and practitioners in Scotland, with the Scottish Attainment Challenge now in its sixth year. However, over the past year the Covid-19 pandemic has added a new dimension to this long-standing concern. There is concern that existing educational inequalities have been widened and new problems have emerged. Some of the problems include digital exclusion; widening of the poverty-related attainment gap; the negative effects on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people; and the impact of the pandemic on food insecurity, particularly for children in receipt of free school meals.

The education research community has responded to the challenges that have been presented. This paper highlights a selection of the major research reports relating to poverty and education in Scotland that have been published over the last 12 months. Many of these examine the impact of the pandemic on children, young people and families who are experiencing poverty, while others consider the future of education in Scotland. Among the many studies and reports completed over the last year are:

- *Attainment and Disadvantage in Scotland's Schools. What may the impact of lockdown be?* Barry Black of the University of Glasgow produced a policy and research briefing in June 2020 which considered the impact of lockdown on attainment and disadvantage.
- *The Poverty-related Attainment Gap: A review of the evidence.* In February 2021 Laura Robertson and Fiona McHardy of The Poverty Alliance undertook a review of evidence in relation to the poverty-related attainment gap on behalf of The Robertson Trust. The report found that COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate pre-existing gaps in educational attainment.
- *Scottish Government, Equity Audit.* The Scottish Government published a report in January 2021 looking at the impact of school building closures. The report drew on both existing and new evidence, and raised concerns about the impact on the development, health and wellbeing, and engagement of many children and young people.
- *Bridging the Digital Divide for Care Experienced Young People in Scotland: If not now, when?* Kenny McGhee and Autumn Roesch-Marsh published a briefing that examined digital exclusion for young people in or moving on from the care system in Scotland on behalf of CELCIS and the Scottish Care

Leavers Covenant. It calls for rights-based digital inclusion to be a key part of pathways planning and aftercare support.

- *The Cost of Learning in Lockdown, March 2021 Update: Scotland findings*. This research from CPAG Scotland builds on an earlier work published in June 2020 and the Cost of the School Day project. It presents evidence on how families experienced learning during lockdown, with a particular focus on families who are struggling with money. CPAG spoke to 1,122 parents and carers, and 649 children and young people in 30 of Scotland's local authorities.

- *School Meals in Scotland in the Autumn of 2020: A snapshot 'State of the Nation' report based on a survey of Catering Leads.* This report by John McKendrick of the Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) at GCU provides evidence on the uptake of school meals based on the expert opinion of catering leads in Scottish schools.

- *Tackling Food Insecurity in Scottish Schools: Case studies of strengthening free school meal provision in Scotland.* Co-authored by John McKendrick and Sophie Cathcart of SPIRU, and commissioned by the Poverty and Inequality Commission, this report was published in March 2021. Against the background of a declining uptake of free school meals in Scotland, the report highlights ten case studies which demonstrate that local action can improve uptake of school meals.

- *Scotland 2030: Future Schooling, Education and Learning*. Scotland's Futures Forum – the Scottish Parliament's think-tank – brought together leading figures in education and children and young people to produce a scenario of what education might look like in 2030.

- *The Commission on School Reform's Submission to the OECD's Review of Curriculum for Excellence.* This report of November 2020 calls for an overhaul of Curriculum for Excellence, citing, among other reasons, a narrowing of the curriculum in S4 and flawed implementation.

The long-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis on poverty and education remains to be seen, but it is clear from recent research that many pre-existing problems affecting children, young people, and families have been exacerbated. There is no shortage of work that helps us to understand the changing face of poverty and education in Scotland; the question for practitioners, policymakers and researchers, then, is to what extent the Covid-intensified adverse effects of poverty and deprivation on educational experiences and outcomes can be addressed.

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School food: learning lessons from a crisis

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School meals in the news

School meals were headline news in the UK throughout 2020 and the early part of 2021. And yet, very little of this public interest focused on the provision of meals *in* schools.

In the early part of 2020, the focus was how local education authorities were responding in lockdown to the challenge of providing the equivalent of school meals during 'home schooling' to children who were eligible for free school meals.

In the middle of 2020, free 'school' meal provision outside term-time emerged as a public concern. The UK Government initially diverged from the Scottish Government (and other devolved administrations) by not committing funds to provide support over the summer holiday period to families in England whose children were entitled to free school meals. Following the intervention of Marcus Rashford, the Manchester United and England international football player, pressure mounted in civil society, encouraging the UK Government to alter its position. It quickly changed tack and in recognition of what were described as 'unprecedented' pressures on household food budgets over the summer of 2020, the UK Government introduced a Covid Summer Food Fund to support families.

Toward the end of 2020, holiday provision of the equivalent of a free school meal re-emerged as a cause for concern. Despite honouring Rashford in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2020 with an MBE for services to vulnerable children in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic, once more the UK Government initially opted not to follow the recommendation of his Task Force to resource holiday provision in order to tackle child food poverty. Once more, this set apart the UK Government from the devolved administrations and latterly to many local administrations in England, who with the support of private sector businesses, committed their own resources to extend free 'school' meal provision for all school holidays up to and including Easter 2021. The UK Government argued that this was not an effective way to tackle child food poverty. However, once more, the UK Government changed tack announcing on November 8th, the introduction of a Covid Winter Grant Scheme to enable local Councils in England to target support to vulnerable families through until the end of March 2021.

And at the start of 2021, there was public outcry over the quality of the food packages in some parts of England that were being provided in lieu of free school meals as schools throughout the UK returned to lockdown.

Although the focus of public interest and policy intervention was on the provision of food to children *outside* school, all of the debates and campaigns were premised on an understanding that it is important to provide food to children *in* schools.

School meals *in* schools in Scotland

The commitment in Scotland to continuing (and extending) school meal provision during the Covid-19 crisis should not have surprised educationalists and anti-poverty activists. For some time, Scotland has acknowledged the contribution of school meals to wider efforts to tackle child poverty. For more than one hundred years (since the **Education (Scotland) Act, 1908**), local educational authorities have had the discretion to provide free school meals, a provision that became a statutory obligation through the **Education (Scotland) Act 1945.**

More recently, universal provision of free school meals in Primary 1-3 was introduced in 2015; improving uptake of free school meals is one of Scotland's National Performance Indicators; plans to extend free school meal provision are an integral part of the plan to extend pre-school education; and monitoring free school meal uptake is one of the indicators in the Child Poverty Measurement Framework, which is used to review progress toward meeting the aspiration of the *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017* to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030.

Significantly, the early debates for the 2021 election to the Scottish Parliament have seen parties across the political spectrum commit to extend free school meal provision to all Primary School pupils, and to extend breakfast provision in schools. Furthermore, the quality of school food is also assured, with updated guidance provided in 2021 on the standards of school food that are required in Scotland.

A cautionary note and a research agenda

Notwithstanding the commitment to providing nutritious food to children in Scottish schools, there is a need for the research community to support this work through critical appraisal of evidence. There are some pressing issues that need to be examined. First, there is a need to acknowledge, understand and then address the reality that free school meal uptake is falling in Scotland – with annual falls in each of the last four years, meaning

that 53.3% of pupils registered for free school meals now present on the typical school day, compared to 58.1% in 2016. Although uptake is lower in secondary schools, it is in the upper years of primary schools where uptake is falling – it will be critical to appraise whether the extension of universal provision to Primary 4-7 arrests this trend. Second, there is a need for more case study analysis to examine outliers. Against these national trends and typical levels of uptake, can be found many examples of schools that are out-performing expectations. There is a need to learn from promising practice across Scotland. Third, the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scottish law in 2021 raises questions about how transformation should be achieved. The extent to which innovations to improve uptake should be imposed on children (for example, by restricting the mobility of children at lunchtimes) or are developed by (or in conjunction with) pupils must now be a priority concern. Fourth, there is not yet robust evidence to support the assertion that school food is impacting on pupil engagement or educational performance. We need to better understand the impact of provision. Finally, we need a more rounded understanding of school food in the life of our schools – school food can contribute to many issues, for example, tackling poverty, promoting local economic development, promoting sustainability, providing nurture and care, promoting social inclusion, facilitating cultural understanding, and realising children's rights. The extent to which these goals are pursued, the interconnections and inconsistencies across them, and whether school meals are impactful to these ends, presents rich fayre for educational researchers.

Addressing educational inequality – are we there yet?

Alastair Wilson & Katie Hunter, School of Education, University of Strathclyde

This short paper on addressing educational inequality in Scotland is based around three questions: *What do we know? What do we ignore?* and *What can we do?*

The ideas are drawn from research development work that has explored different aspects of educational inequality and how to address it. This has included research into widening access to higher education for those from working class and poor backgrounds; literacy development for children and more recently the ways in which schools have drawn from the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to effect change.

What do we know?

While there is evidence of some isolated gains, inequality in educational outcomes in Scotland is not decreasing. In addition, COVID related issues, are likely to further increase the current divide. A crucial consideration is that the research literature tells us that school-based and led interventions are not considered significant in effecting the change of scale required. These forms of interventions are encouraged if not required by the different priorities of the SAC and PEF forms of funding for schools. But in terms of addressing inequality, they promote a narrow conceptualisation of the issue. There is an implicit narrative of finding interventions, evaluating and scaling up effectively the pursuit of a magic solution or set of solutions which once discovered will effect change. A further key problem here, is that even if we were to agree with this course of action, there doesn't appear to be the required funding for innovation, research and development that could generate the knowledge needed to act.

What do we ignore?

There are however alternatives and a broader, deeper understanding of inequality is available to us. The role of social class, of connections and the power of social and cultural capital is widely discussed in the research. Yet when we look more closely at educational inequality in Scotland it becomes apparent that little of this thinking is informing our efforts to address it. We hold back on discussing the extent of inequality, the unfairness of it and the dominance of privilege. In our research into access to higher education and the most competitive professions, we see a landscape that nurtures privilege. We have communities in Scotland where few, if any young people will become doctors, dentists, lawyers, engineers or teachers. Rather than drawing on ideas around social class and access to social and cultural capital to challenge such inequality we persist in locating the problem as a deficit in the children and young people establishing them instead as lacking

information, ambition, confidence etc. In this way we also then ignore the potential role of communities as fundamental to nurturing education. How can we encourage education in communities that are so effectively excluded from so much of what education offers others?

We ignore the role of privilege in accessing and dominating the professions. Mechanisms of discrimination implicitly permeate much of the processes of application and admission. A good score is needed in the UKCAT 'intelligence test' but many young people know nothing of it prior to application. They don't know that you can improve your score with practice or that a practice pack is available (at a cost). Yet this practice is provided as part of the curriculum in some private schools. Similarly work experience and knowledge of the different professions is explicitly required for some applications and essential for informing successful personal statements and interviews. Yet what young people from working class or poor backgrounds have access to the right connections to realise these possibilities? Our responses to educational inequality too often ignore the role of institutional practices that are implicitly bias. Such issues of social class bias would not be acceptable if viewed from race or ethnicity perspectives. Perhaps even more puzzling, we ignore our own potential to effect change. We search for and buy in 'off the shelf solutions', projects and interventions that claim to solve our problems. Where is the funding for collaborative practice and innovation?

What we can do?

We have the tools at our disposal to think and act differently. The first step might be to imagine a different world, a different approach. This could be one in which dignitaries and academics will come to Scotland to see how educational inequality has been dismantled using imagination, progressive ideas and research! To realise this, we need to be pragmatic, to invest in learning about our own systems and processes. We need to support our own teachers, communities, children and young people. A model of research informed innovation and development is not a revolutionary idea. It requires us to try things, to learn and develop practice. It's an approach in which we acknowledge and nurture the role of communities and seeks to work with key partners to recognise crucial issues and effect change. Maybe one place to start is to really understand the mechanisms and processes that are so effective in the maintaining of privilege. Only in this way can we begin to understand how inequality is so deeply embedded.

What we are doing?

Our work has tried to progress these ideas. In the development of intergenerational mentoring, we are working with schools to help young people from working class and poor households access and be supported in higher education. Retired professionals form the majority of our mentors and are people with the networks, knowledge and time to help, that the young people need. Working with Barnardo's we are progressing literacy work with

families and communities, seeking new ways to engage with people and supporting third sector workers to work with children and families in ways that support literacy development. Working with the local community as the focus, we are also developing a reading mentor programme for children and opportunities for engaging in music for young people that have been excluded from formal provision. This work is not easy but it is happening and can, with time and care, develop. The young people we have supported are our measure of success. The children and young people we are still to reach are the responsibility of us all.

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School collaboration and enquiry to promote equity: the Network for Social and Educational Equity

Kevin Lowden and Stuart Hall, Robert Owen Centre, University of Glasgow

The value of practitioner research

There is evidence that action research and evidence-informed critical enquiry can enhance practitioners' pedagogical skills, which then promotes positive learner outcomes. The concept of the teacher as researcher emerged in the US in the 1950s (Corey, 1949) and, during the late 1960s and 1970s, the concept developed in the UK to recognise the importance of teacher agency and reflective and reflexive practice e.g., Stenhouse (1975). Reeves et al (2010) found that practitioner research improved understanding of learning theory, fostered analytical skills, reflection and increased attention to issues of evidence and pupil learning. De Paor and Murphy (2018), state that, 'teacher research has been identified as a transformative model of continuous professional development' (p. 169). In addition, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) claim that 'teachers who engage in self-directed enquiry into their own work in classrooms also find the process intellectually satisfying,' (p. 18-19). Research has shown that practitioners who engage in such action research to enhance their professional learning are key in promoting positive educational outcomes, irrespective of socioeconomic background (Opper, 2019; Hamre & Pianta, 2014; Rivers & Sanders, 2002). Reeves and Drew (2013) stress the importance of the cyclical nature of action research: Knowledge feeds into and influences practice, which, in itself, generates new knowledge, and an approach which becomes embedded in the routine practice of the school and becomes part of the professional identity of teachers.

Making practitioner research collaborative

While individual practitioner research can enhance pedagogy and make a difference in the classroom, it may be criticised for lacking wider and sustained impact. The Network for Social & Educational Equity (NSEE) model addresses any such concerns by making practitioner enquiry part of a systematic collaborative learning activity within whole schools, between schools and beyond schools. The literature argues that having teachers collaboratively engaged in enquiry is critical for professional learning and educational improvement (Elliott, 2009; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Chapman and Hadfield, 2010). Where action research involves teachers and like-minded professionals, working collaboratively they can maximise the impact of lessons learned and move knowledge across their systems. Such collaborative learning networks informed by practitioner research are, perhaps, even more important as the system moves to cope and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supporting teachers to develop their collaborative action research skills

While the benefits of such action research are evident, practitioners have reported the need for support and advice to enhance their skills and knowledge in this area. In particular, requests for guidance on appropriate research methods and related analysis, as well as writing up findings for impact are frequently highlighted by practitioners (Lowden *et al.,* 2019). This is all the more important as teachers' roles in Scotland have developed to incorporate a greater focus on research engagement and practitioner enquiry. The Scottish Government, OECD and international research literature stress that teachers' engagement with research is crucial for school and teacher effectiveness (OECD, 2015; Scottish Government, 2017).

Since 2013, the ROC team at the University of Glasgow has worked closely with practitioners, local authorities, other Higher Education colleagues, professional associations such as the EIS and policy colleagues in Scotland to develop practitioners' action research skills. This is a key part of the mission of the team, which sees collaborative practitioner enquiry as integral to promoting educational and social change to promote equity.

The ROC team has drawn on their collective research knowledge and skills to provide a particular model of professional learning to enhance practitioners' action research skills and abilities. Part of the ROC team's work is the Network for Social & Educational Equity (NSEE), this aims to enhance collaborative enquiry among practitioners and educational leaders as part of their work to tackle the poverty-related achievement gap in education. Importantly, it seeks to empower teachers and develop and build on their professional knowledge and skills. It is not a top-down, 'what works,' approach, but rather a co-constructed and flexible framework that adheres to key principles, including, the use of collaboration and practitioner research; promoting leadership at all levels, co-production and locally-led innovation.

Our team works with practitioners and other partner services to co-produce approaches that promote practitioners' action research skills to enhance their practice and reflect context while also building leadership capacity and supporting system development.

This collaboration and practitioner enquiry helps schools and their partners to:

- *Understand context and local issues, including the nature of poverty-related learning and wellbeing challenges*
- *Co-develop learning and other strategies to tackle these challenges*
- *Assess and understand the impact of these strategies using appropriate data and evidence including survey, interviews, systematic observation and detailed narratives.*
- *Mobilise knowledge across their networks and wider system to increase and sustain impact.*

The NSEE approach was piloted during research and support activity, focusing on tackling poverty-related

educational inequity - School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) (Chapman et al, 2016; 2017). Since the SIPP evaluation, the programme of work has developed in a number of Scottish educational authorities as well as the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). Moreover, the approach is also being developed with our international partners including higher education colleagues in Chile, to support practitioner action research as an integral part in professional learning systems for educational improvement.

The ROC team has a strong commitment to promoting teacher agency as an integral part of positive educational change to tackle educational and social inequity. Indeed, practitioner action research can support school development in a range of challenging and less challenging situations, but only if it facilitates teacher agency rather being imposed as a top-down initiative (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). Furthermore, Chapman *et al* (2011) argue that school improvement that is informed by action research and that tackles inequality is much more likely to emerge as a result of collective capacity, that empowers teachers, rather than through centrally driven, top-down mandates, underpinned by accountability mechanisms. Our growing experience demonstrates that, even in challenging contexts, collaborative action research provides an approach that is flexible, practicable, robust and sustainable.

Working in this way, practitioners through their collaborative enquiry become agents of change, adopting research that is participatory, transformative and potentially challenges the power dynamics in their systems. This enables teachers to play a more empowered role in tackling educational inequity; using evidence and collaborating with other professionals and in partnership with the communities and families they serve.

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Widening 'example spaces' for preparing new teachers for inclusion: insights for teacher educators

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Introduction

Inclusive education continues to be an important policy driver globally (UNESCO, 2020). In this summarised short paper, we report how university-based teacher educators in Scotland prepare new teachers to support all learners including those experiencing poverty and disadvantage. The main idea we present relates to supporting student teachers by widening what one of the tutors referred to as, 'example spaces'. What makes these, 'example spaces,' interesting is that they are co-constructed by student teachers and teacher educators.

Rationale and Background

The rationale informing our work is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) which presents an ongoing challenge for teacher educators to prepare new teachers to address the rights of increasingly diverse categories of learners. In Scotland, the National Framework for Inclusion (Scottish Teacher Education Committee, 2014) was developed to support consistent approaches to the promotion of inclusion across Scotland's Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers.

The National Framework for Inclusion was developed by the Scottish Universities Inclusion Group (SUIG). This is a working group of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE), formerly Scottish Teacher Education Committee, and has representation from all of Scotland's Schools of Education. Currently, SUIG is undertaking a mapping project to provide a comprehensive picture of how the principles underpinning inclusive pedagogy are addressed in ITE across Scotland.

Throughout Scotland, the National Framework for Inclusion provides a guide to support a coherent approach to promoting inclusion in and for teacher education. As such, university-based teacher educators draw on the National Framework for Inclusion to support student teachers to work inclusively with increasingly diverse groups of learners, including those experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

As part of the mapping exercise, we discovered that some university-based teacher educators (hereafter, tutors) were creating what they referred to as new 'spaces' for student teachers to think about inclusion and how to

enact change. This discovery prompted further research to explore more fully what meanings the tutors ascribed to the so called new 'spaces'. Here we report one key finding using illustrative examples from a case study of one of the tutors.

Widening the example-space

The illustrative examples presented below are from a case study of one tutor, and together they begin to reveal how this tutor thinks about and uses the idea of example space(s) in practice. As the tutor explains, example spaces can be created by involving student teachers and tutors in the co-construction of what they referred to as a 'landscape'. This 'landscape' is based on three different theoretical perspectives associated with the tutor's subject specialism.

The tutor believes that recognising difference in *how* this curricular subject can be taught, via the co-construction of a landscape, supports student teachers to think more broadly about differences.

For example, the tutor stated

> *"[student teachers] build on [the landscape] bit-by-bit… it [is] quite important to have at least three different perspectives so that the students get a sense of a wider landscape …To try and get them to think more broadly, that there are differences and different approaches out there, and they have different strengths and different weaknesses…"*

However, the tutor explained that this way of working, with three different perspectives, is challenging for the student teachers who can perceive difference negatively.

The tutor claimed,

> *"…it's hard for them, because there's a lot there to get their heads around… it lets them start thinking [that] different people say different things and they're not arguing with one another, there's just a different way of thinking about what we do …"*

Importantly, for the tutor the selection of different viewpoints on their subject specialism allows for a widening of the 'example-space' within the curricular landscape for the student teachers.

The tutor clarified,

> *"So, I would talk about example spaces…they need at least three [perspectives] and they need to have enough [difference] in between [them]."*

The tutor was clear that this is not about tutors *modelling* or *privileging* only one particular approach. The tutor asserted,

> *"… it's not modelling…I'm not a great fan of people talking about teacher education as modelling*."

For this tutor, different perspectives on how the subject can be taught are used to '*widen the example-space*' and that widening of the example-space provides an opportunity for student teachers to recognise and

appreciate 'diversity' and diverse ways of thinking.

Reflective Questions

Providing different perspectives on a subject, may come as little surprise given that the tutor is working in a university setting.   However, the idea of 'widening example spaces', by involving student teachers in the co-construction of a landscape for each curricular area, offers more in terms of *how* we might support student teachers to respond to learner differences, including those learners experiencing poverty and disadvantage. This insight has generated the following reflective questions:

- Whose and what type of examples should teacher educators engage with?
- Is the current example space sufficiently rich to prepare teachers for working in high poverty school environments?
- What type of examples are necessary to support student teachers to better understand and be able to enact inclusion in high poverty school environments?

These questions point to the need for continued enquiry within teacher education around the notion of 'example spaces', specifically, and tutors' practices in relation to diversity more generally. It is our assumption that tutors are enacting a range of principles, ideas and theories and that by surfacing and making these visible we can contribute to new teacher educator learning and development in and for inclusion.

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Young Carers and Covid-19

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The pandemic has had a dramatic impact on many aspects of everyday life in Scotland. It has had an effect on many households and household incomes, and as a result, on many children and young people who are dependents. The serious social problems of child mental health, child abuse, digital exclusion and food insecurity all pre-existed Covid-19 and have been exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic. For example, some young people who had received support for mental health issues through the school, have experienced a reduction in the service. The restrictions and lockdowns have also created enormous difficulties for that group of children and young people who are often absent from, or receive limited attention, in the public and academic discourses on education: young carers.

The *Statutory Guidance to The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016* was published in 2018 by the Scottish Government and applies to adult carers and young carers. The Guidelines were introduced to provide support. The definition of a young carer is the same definition that is used for adult carers:

> Under the Act a 'carer' is an individual who provides or intends to provide care for another individual. A carer can be caring for one or more cared-for persons. A cared- for person can have one or more carers. They don't need to live in the same house (Scottish Government, 2018).

The Act is clear that the only distinctions are *young carers* and *adult carers* and makes no provision for *young adult carers* (16-25). A young carer refers to any young person who is under 18 and has caring responsibilities for a family member or members, or a friend. It also refers to a young person who is 18 and has remained at school and has caring responsibilities. There is, however, no lower age limit. The Scottish Government guidance acknowledges that there may be a small number of young carers who are very young at pre-school stages or early years of primary schooling. In other words, the young carer may be as young as five years old and, in some cases, even younger.

The 2011 census records 177, 918 young carers in England and Wales and a gender differential (54% girls and 46% boys) (Office for National Statistics, 2013). The Scottish government estimates that there are 44,000 young carers in Scotland. Similar to the figures in England there is a higher number of female young carers (Scottish Government, 2017). The figure of 44,000 is probably higher because this estimate is from 2015 and some children do not recognise themselves as young carers, they simply see themselves as looking after other

people. The person, or persons, cared for are likely to be ill, have a disability, a mental health condition or suffer from drug or alcohol addiction or related health problems. The caring can involve:

- *medical or nursing care, such as helping someone to take medication or applying dressings;*
- *personal care, such as helping to wash, dress or eat;*
- *practical support, such as taking a person shopping or to medical appointments, cleaning or accompanying them to social events; and*
- *emotional support.*

The young carer often has a role in caring for younger siblings.

The criteria for recognition for being a young carer is to be set in each local authority. Local authorities (and heath boards) are duty bound to recognise and prepare a Young Carer Statement (YCS) where appropriate. There are two possibilities: (1) The young carer may self-identify and the responsible authority must prepare a YCS, (2) The young carer is identified by practitioners and must be offered a YCS. If the young carer accepts, the responsible authority must prepare a YCS (Scottish Government, 2018). This could be prepared by a third sector body. The YCS assesses needs for support and:

> *The information within the YCS will include the nature and extent of care; the impact of caring; and the extent to which the carer is able and willing to provide care.*

The YCS must be agreed with the young carer and the support agreed.

In 2019, the Scottish government started to award an annual Young Carers Grant for young people aged 16-18 who spend an average of 16 hours a week caring for somebody in receipt of disability benefit. The grant of £305.10 can be used for any purpose (Scottish Government, 2020).

Research conducted by Robison, Egan and Inglis in 2017 surveyed 11,200 secondary school pupils in Glasgow and aimed to investigate the prevalence of young carers in the sample, any differences in their health and wellbeing and their expectations for once they have left school. The numbers of children providing care were high: around one in eight pupils were providing care for somebody and almost one third commented that nobody knew about the caring duties. There was evidence that they were more likely to be experiencing the effects of poverty. Young carers in the sample were often registered for free school meals and living in a lone parent household. Young carers in lone parent families were also overrepresented in a major research survey in England in 2016 (Clay et al., 2016). These two sets of research findings are consistent with a Scottish

Government report that there is a higher percentage of young carers in deprived areas, they are affected by poverty and they provide more care (Scottish Government, 2017). There is evidence that the young carers themselves have a high level of illness or disability and are more likely to suffer from the effects of anxiety, stress and depression. There is mixed evidence on the impact of caring on school education – where it does have an impact, this can result in absence from school to attend to caring duties and tiredness in the classroom. The caring duties may restrict the demographical choices in Further and Higher Education and female carers are less likely to pursue third level education.

There has been a reduction in social services during the pandemic and consequently more pressure on young carers to assume further caring responsibilities. A small-scale survey conducted by Dr Blake-Holmes from the University of East Anglia with twenty participants during the period of the pandemic between April 2020 and June 2020 demonstrated that many young carers feel a strong sense that school provides a welcome routine and respite from caring responsibilities. This has been disrupted by lockdowns and school closures. Some young carers felt higher levels of stress as they struggled to balance the demands of home learning with caring (including caring for younger siblings) and finding a quiet space to study. Many young carers had to deal with the deteriorating mental health of the adult person(s) they care for. Some young carers are more socially isolated and disadvantaged than other young people and this has been intensified during school closures.

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Widening the Gap?: The challenges for equitable music education in Scotland

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This paper reports on a study carried out by researchers within the School of Education, University of Strathclyde and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The research formed the qualitative component of a study *What's Going on Now? A study of young people making music across Scotland,* formally commissioned and overseen by Creative Scotland, on behalf of the Music Education Partnership Group and a consortium of funders. The study carried out a mapping exercise to look at music provision across three local authorities that were broadly reflective of local authorities across Scotland. In-depth interviews were then carried out with a range of stakeholders who were knowledgeable in the extent of music opportunities for young people (this also included pupils, young people and parents).

What we did

We developed case studies of three local authority areas to understand what music opportunities existed for children and young people both within formal education and out with schools. The case studies and their characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Case Studies

Case Study A	Case Study B	Case Study C
Prosperous island community • strong traditional music scene strong music network involving schools, the local arts scene and a newly flourishing private sector.	Urban area of a major city with a largely working-class population and significant areas of poverty. • No conspicuous music tradition outside of that established around marching bands.	A semi-rural community with a large rural area and a central city. • Central geographical location makes it accessible to visiting arts organisation • City concert hall houses diverse range of concerts programmes and community events

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with key informants, knowledgeable in the extent and nature of current provision across each case study. These also included interviews with children and young people

within each of the specified areas.

What we found out

The research found substantive inequality in access to music across schools. This is captured in Table 2 which shows stark differences in two of the case study areas between the numbers of pupils accessing formal music provision and taking it forward as an academic subject. The research found that the rising costs of music provision effectively excluded some pupils. In case study C, the cost of playing an instrument each year could be in excess of £700 which included not only one-to-one or group tuition, but also the cost to participate in music ensembles and to attend a residential music week and including the associated travel costs. The message here is clear – a pupil attending a school in a predominantly working class/poorer area or from such a background is much less likely to engage with music as a subject and subsequently to have access to instrumental tuition.

TABLE 2: Comparison of number of students presented for National Qualifications in similar sized secondary schools in case study A and B

	Secondary school case study A	Secondary school case study B
Pupil population	~920	~950
Pupils taking music at National 5	Two full classes ~40	10
Pupils taking Higher music	42	5
Pupils taking Advanced Higher music	18	3

While this may have been predicted, what was of further concern was that there was also evidence of substantive inequality in access to music within schools. A two-tier system was becoming enacted in one secondary school between more middle-class pupils who were able to access formal provision and those from more working class and poorer backgrounds. The research revealed that a focus on performance, privileges those children and young people more able to demonstrate academic and performance-based competencies. This was related to competency and familiarity with an instrument that stemmed from having access to private tuition in primary school. With parents in primary having to choose between playing an instrument and other extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports), this inequality in access to music begins in primary schools and persists

throughout. This competency was then used as a criteria for selecting pupils for music tuition in secondary school where free and subsided tuition was prioritised for those taking qualifications at a National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level. The music department in the school recognised this issue and some additional lunchtime music clubs were delivered by teachers to provide opportunities for those unable to afford the costs. This situation was evident across the case studies and generally skews formal music provision towards the fulfilment of performance-based criteria. This benefits those children and young people who can access in-school or private tuition and opportunities to engage in extra-curricular music activities that enhance broader engagement.

What are the implications for this?

Despite current focus on addressing inequality in Scottish education, participation in music is not a possibility for all children and young people and is becoming only accessible to those who can afford it and who can align with what is culturally valued in schools. Children and young people from working-class or poor households, disabled children and those with additional support needs are effectively excluded. The research found that provision for these groups is stunted and there was no evidence of strong models of inclusive practice. The implications for this situation are that, left as it is, music provision will become a solely middle-class pursuit. There is a need not only to address the financial aspect but also the socio-cultural practices that are contributing to this situation as this goes hand in hand with what's valued and accepted.

What are we doing?

The research team are progressing this work in two ways. We are looking to extend the research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that create the financial, social and cultural barriers to participation discovered above. In parallel we are developing work in local communities that enables different forms of engagement in music for children and young people which may in time allow them more equal access to music as their school careers progress.

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Developing inclusive practices: insights from probationer teachers working in high poverty school environments.

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Introduction

The study reported here is part of a larger project supported by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE), to research teacher education pedagogies and induction strategies to better prepare early career teachers to make a positive difference for communities with high levels of poverty. The SCDE project involves eight initial teacher education providers in Scotland and is designed to enhance early career teachers' capabilities within the context of the Scottish Government Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government, 2015).

Background to study

Growing up in poverty is recognised as being detrimental to academic attainment, and an inhibitor to engagement with school. Schools located in communities with high levels of poverty present further challenges for teachers, and by extension for teacher educators, that go beyond a focus on standard educational provision. Teachers in such schools take on increasing responsibilities to help learners participate meaningfully in school (Naven, Sosu, Spencer, and Egan, 2019). Yet, it is well known that many teachers feel unprepared to work with diverse learner groups (Cochran-Smith, Villegas, Abrams, Chavez-Moreno, Mills, and Stern, 2016).

Preparing and supporting new teachers to work inclusively with increasingly diverse groups of learners, including those from high poverty contexts, is a dilemma facing teacher education worldwide (Florian & Camedda, 2019). In responding to this global challenge, we draw from inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011) which is concerned with achieving positive educational outcomes for all learners. Inclusive pedagogy is underpinned by a commitment to addressing learner differences, without marginalising or stigmatising learners and requires practitioners to adopt a relational approach, (i.e. working with others) to remove what Pantić & Florian (2015, p345) describe as, "intersecting barriers to inclusion". Recognising that different contexts can present challenges for researching inclusive pedagogy, Spratt and

Florian (2014) propose an Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) framework for supporting teachers for working in diverse contexts. The IPAA is organised around 3 assumptions:

Assumption 1. Difference is accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conceptualisation of learning

Assumption 2. Teachers must believe they are qualified/capable of teaching all children

Assumption 3. Teachers continually develop creative new ways of working with others

Using the IPAA enables judgements about what inclusion is and whether or not it has occurred, to be replaced by an exploration of the extent to which a principled stance is enacted.

Study Design

An exploratory multiple case study approach was used to examine how probationer teachers learn to enact inclusive pedagogy in schools located in high poverty environments. In total seven probationer teachers, all graduates of the same ITE Programme and familiar with the inclusive pedagogy approach, participated in the study. Four participants were from two primary schools and three from the same secondary school. To elicit descriptions of their lived experiences, each probationer teacher served as their own case in terms of data collection, via classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and reflective diaries.

Data Analysis

In this study, we sought to gain a better understanding of the probationers' contexts, and what they were able to do in relation to inclusive pedagogy. Data analysis was guided by the Primary Research Question,

What are the lived experiences of probationer teachers learning to enact inclusive pedagogy in schools located in high poverty environments?

The analysis was divided into three phases:

First, we conducted within-case analysis of each participant's data to understand the individual context and nature of their experiences.

Next, we constructed a mini-case write up summary for each participant. Pertinent themes informed by the IPAA framework enabled us to surface and name examples of what the probationer teachers were able to do and to link these to the key assumptions underpinning inclusive pedagogy.

Finally, we conducted a cross-case analysis to identify any replicating patterns in terms of eliciting a better understanding of the contexts the probationer teachers were working in and what they were able to do in

relation to inclusive pedagogy.

Main Finding and Insight

Our main finding, reported here, showed the importance of probationers developing intraprofessional working practices to help bridge the principles of inclusive pedagogy within their classroom practices. We use the term intraprofessional working to highlight that the probationer teachers were working with a team of professionals all from the teaching profession. The majority of intraprofessional working practices surfaced were with pupil support assistants.

For example, one primary probationer, when interviewed, shared that,

> *"(having a PSA was) such a huge help because of the scale of differences I have in the class, having some of them get that extra support that I can't always give them."*

Another secondary probationer stated,

> *"The PSAs work with me quite a lot so they know that although I like them to stay with their key pupils, I actually like them to circulate the room using their own initiative... "*

The finding highlights the informal nature of intraprofessional working, which primarily emerges in response to support needs as lessons unfold, suggesting purposeful intraprofessional working practices could be developed further.

This insight has generated the following reflective questions:

- What does intraprofessional working mean in and for teacher education?

- What types of intraprofessional working practices are possible for probationer teachers to engage with to support inclusive pedagogy?

- What might ITE focus more on, to support the transition to the Induction Year in terms of preparing new teachers for intraprofessional working to support inclusive pedagogy?

Such questions highlight the importance of enquiring into how teacher educators prepare probationer teachers to lead, frame and navigate intraprofessional working to support better learning for themselves and their pupils.

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The Challenges of Digital Exclusion

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During the pandemic, many education systems throughout the world have adopted online learning and teaching or hybrid models during the periods of restricted access to schools and during lockdowns. However, there have been serious concerns about the extent of digital exclusion (or digital poverty) and the number of children who have been affected. UNICEF has pointed out that 1.6 billion children worldwide were affected by school closures and had to continue their learning at home (UNICEF, 2020). However, only one third of children and young people throughout the world have access to the internet at home. This is a global figure and, in some parts of the world, very few children have access to the internet. There is a stark contrast between low and high income countries. In high income countries 87% of the children and young people have access to the internet compared to 6% in low income countries. UNICEF reports that the figure is 5% for children and young people in West and Central Africa. These figures highlight the challenges of the digital and equity gap.

The success of moves by educational systems to online provision is determined by the (1) technology and the technological infrastructure and (2) the skill set of teachers and pupils required to support such a move. This means that the following conditions have to be met. First, devices are regularly available (available at the time when needed) and fully functional. Second, there is regular and uninterrupted access to the internet. Third, the teachers are competent in the use of technology and have acquired skills in the methods of online delivery or hybrid delivery. Fourth, the pupils have adapted to the new modes of delivery.

A very interesting number of resourceful alternatives to online learning and teaching have been used in different parts of the world: radio, television, printed learning packs and phone calls (Schleicher, 2020). A number of countries in Africa, for example Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, have made extensive use of the more traditional communication tools of radio and television (Kuwonu, 2020; Zatat, 2020; UNESCO, 2020a, 2020b). There have been particular challenges for children who are refugees as there may be linguistic barriers to online learning and parents may feel ill equipped to support their children (UNHCR, 2020a, 2020b). Many refugee children have experienced serious disruption to their education in the period of the pandemic and will require considerable support and resources to recommence school education once more (UNHCR, 2020c).

While much information has been gathered regarding young people and digital exclusion there is less research

regarding the digital, 'readiness,' of those charged with educating them. Ongoing research by the Network for Social & Educational Equity (NSEE) team at the Robert Owen Centre in the University of Glasgow has begun to explore this issue while focusing on the impact of school closure in Scotland during the recent COVID pandemic. Two focus group discussions, involving twenty-two educational practitioners, were conducted in January 2021 and these have revealed that teaching staff may also be experiencing forms of digital exclusion, albeit effects with less obvious impact on their life chances. While many of our teacher informants spoke about the positive opportunities afforded by the development of online teaching and access to digital media that has come about in response to school closures it is also the case that some teachers are feeling they lack the technical skills necessary to fully exploit this new electronic world. Moreover, a number of staff also indicated that they not only lacked the skills to engage to best effect online but that they also lacked either the computer hardware and/or adequate broadband access to engage effectively.

UNESCO has called for the roll out of a serious educational recovery package in January 2021 (UNESCO, 2021). The aim is to set out on a more resilient, green and inclusive trajectory. One of the imperatives is to, 'build resilience to future shocks'. The digital divide must be narrowed and connectivity and electrification extended throughout the world. This means a focus on technology and an opportunity to assess the technology needs of both children and teachers. This is also an opportunity to focus on users. Throughout the pandemic different models of schooling were adopted including home learning for all, home learning for all except the children of essential workers, rotational schooling and hybrid models. Strategies to prepare for 'future shocks' include the provision of professional development for teachers to adapt to these different models of remote and hybrid teaching. This can be extended to teacher education and the preparation of teachers for the future.

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The Cost of Learning in Lockdown – 2021 update

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At the Cost of the School Day project, we know that many families find it challenging to manage the costs of education and that this can affect children and young people's participation, inclusion and learning (Naven et al, 2019). When Covid-19 led to school closures for most learners in March 2020, we carried out research with over 3000 parents and carers and 1000 children and young people to find out about family experiences of learning at home during lockdown (CPAG in Scotland, 2020a).

We heard that the cost burdens of school closures were falling most heavily on low income families. These parents reported more stress and worry around remote learning and household finances than those in better off homes. They were twice as likely to say they lacked the resources needed for remote learning and were more likely to say they found it difficult to support their children's learning at home. A third of people worried most about money, had to purchase a laptop or other device during this first lockdown.

We revisited these themes when schools closed again at the start of 2021. This updated report (CPAG in Scotland, 2021) is based on survey responses from 1,122 parents and carers and 649 children and young people across 30 local authorities. It looks at digital inclusion, remote learning and financial concerns and support with the aim of helping educators and policymakers understand how families on low incomes can best be supported now and during the Covid recovery period.

Main findings

Financial concerns and support

Parents on low incomes in our survey are more concerned about money now than during the first lockdown. School closures put extra pressure on family budgets. Many parents spoke about additional food, electricity

and heating costs with children at home. 90% of low-income families said they were spending more than usual on essential bills.

Financial support for families was valued by those receiving it, particularly FSM replacements while out of school and in holidays and the Covid winter payment for families receiving FSMs. However, parents weren't always aware of what support was on offer and to what they were entitled. We also heard from some who were struggling financially but were in work with incomes just above FSM eligibility thresholds: pre-pandemic. At least 45,000 children in Scotland were living in poverty but were not entitled to FSM (CPAG, 2020b). The recent Scottish budget commitment to universal Primary aged FSM will go a long way to remedying this in future but financial support is not reaching all families who need it right now.

> "Earning a lot less than we did pre pandemic and still have same outgoings so finding it very difficult but don't qualify for support." (Mum, Inverclyde)

Continued digital exclusion

Digital investment and effort at government, local authority and school level over the last year was reflected in positive stories from families receiving devices. However, 35% of parents on low incomes in our survey, said they still didn't have everything they needed for children to participate in remote learning.
Digital devices remained the most commonly missing resource. We heard about not having devices, not having suitable devices, completing work on mobile phones and having to share with others. These challenges made participation and learning more difficult.

> "Missing out on zoom chats as they clash and only have one tablet between the 3 children. Getting stressed and angry as they can't do their work when they want to." (Mum, Renfrewshire)

FSM choice and dignity

In the first lockdown, local authorities provided FSM replacements in different ways, including cash, vouchers and food parcels (Treanor, 2020). In our 2020 survey, parents were emphatically in favour of direct payments as the best option for their families. Since then, there has been a welcome move towards cash delivery from local authorities with the majority now providing FSM replacements in this way.
In our 2021 survey, parents repeatedly called for cash first approaches. 75% of families receiving cash payments said this works well, allowing them to choose where to shop, get best value, buy food their children will eat, shop safely online and avoid stigma often associated with vouchers.

"It's a dignity thing for me as well. Just because I'm entitled to a little extra help doesn't mean I should be shamed which is what vouchers etc. do as families are embarrassed to use them." (Mum, Glasgow)

Poverty aware schools

Parents appreciated when their schools understood financial pressures and took action to reduce them, for example, by introducing relaxed uniform policies in the Autumn term. Also appreciated was information about financial help, supportive and sensitive approaches and timely communication about costs.

"FSM information is sent out regularly about how to apply, also the fact that period products are being sent home for children. Excellent service." (Mum of two children, Shetland Islands)

Priorities for returning to school

Children and young people told us about missing their friends, normal learning and routine. Some spoke about the creative ways their teachers had offered support and connection and many wanted even more through contact, live lessons, feedback and chat. Both primary and secondary pupils want help to adjust and return to a routine alongside help with learning and catching up as they return to school. Parents want to see support for mental health and wellbeing prioritised.

"I have been struggling with mental health (having no motivation to get up out of bed) making me slowly get more and more behind on work making it harder and harder for me to start work as I get stressed on the amount of work I have to do." (Girl, 16, Shetland Islands)

Implications

Lockdown and school closures have been difficult for most people but low-income families hit hardest by the pandemic (Collard et al. 2021) have faced particular challenges. The experiences of parents and children in this research help to clarify the action required on family incomes and education in the months ahead.

Firstly, families on low incomes need financial support which builds on the Scottish Child Payment and Covid hardship payments welcomed by families in difficult times. Cash first approaches to FSM provision out with school are needed across Scotland, and, building on the welcome commitment to universal P1-P7 free school meals, we need to look at FSM eligibility thresholds more widely to ensure support reaches those who

need it.

Next, even as lockdown eases and more children return to school, some will be inevitably learning remotely at points over the coming months. If we want children and young people on low incomes to have a chance of participating equally then government, local authorities and schools must continue and step up efforts to ensure that all children and young people can realise their remote learning entitlement to 'appropriate physical resources where needed' (Education Scotland, 2021).

And finally, we know the difference schools can make to their families and children when they understand poverty, reduce financial pressures and help maximise incomes. As the financial impact of Covid-19 continues to make itself known for families across Scotland, these poverty aware school practices and policies must be strengthened, enhanced and supported. They are now more important than ever before.

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